

Beginning external research on social safety and culture at the Royal Academy of Art (KABK)

How can you participate?

Dear students and staff of the Royal Academy of Art, The Hague,

After concerning signals about social safety and culture within the Royal Academy of Art, the Board of Governors, who supervise the management of the school, have asked us, Bezemer & Schubad, to carry out an external, independent and thorough investigation into these signals.

The goal of this investigation will be to learn more about the experience of both students and staff in relation to social safety and culture within the school. We would like to hear more about any experiences of intimidation, sexual harassment, bullying, discrimination, aggression, violence, or other forms of social insecurity that you may have experienced. Please note that this investigation is not only into inappropriate behaviour. We are also interested in more subtle, silent or hidden aspects of a culture that may make you feel unsafe.

The goal of this investigation is that measures may be taken in response to it. We at Bezemer & Schubad will ensure this by submitting a detailed public report that outlines the core structural changes needed for the creation of a safe environment within your school. In our previous experience with this sort of enquiry, management has been keen to follow the advice within these reports.

Our research will be broad in scope. Virtually all information that we gather in relation to the culture of social safety will be used. In order to collect this information, researchers from Bezemer & Schubad would like to receive input from students and staff about both their experiences, and their suggestions for the future. Former students and staff are also welcome to share their thoughts.

How will we approach this research? How can current and former students and staff help us, and provide as much information as possible? How can you participate?

Preconditions for research

The investigation will be conducted by experienced researchers from our agency. They all have a background as confidential advisers, familiar with all sorts of experiences concerning social safety and culture. They are trained to listen carefully and without judgement, and they are experienced in dealing with confidential information. They will all also have previous experience of academic institutions like the KABK.

Bezemer & Schubad conduct independent research. This means that at no stage in the investigation - beforehand, as information is being gathered, or as the report is being written - will management or the Board of Governors of the school interfere with, or otherwise hinder, the work and outcome of the investigation. This is a pre-condition that we always set, and management and the Board of Governors have fully agreed with this. They have also agreed that a facilitating group made up of students and staff and organised by the DMR, will help us find ways to reach out to as many of you as possible, so you might provide input for the research.

How can you participate in the survey?

It is important to us that, if you participate, you feel completely free and unrestrained in telling us about your experience. Your contribution will be included as an anonymous statement. Every story, whether positive or negative, concerning social safety and culture at KABK, is welcome. And everyone is welcome to share: current and former students, tutors, other staff members and management.

We will not be given e-mail addresses of former students or staff however, so please help us by sharing this invitation letter with them.

To share your story or information with our researchers please write an e-mail to: researchkabk@bezemerschubad.nl

You can send all kinds of information. A letter, an email or other documents, as well as your own statement. Short or long. Any information that you think important for the report is welcome. Please send this now, if you are ready to do that. Or later. Information is welcome in the coming months.

When you send your e-mail, please also let us know if you are open to being interviewed.

Maybe you would like support for such an interview, before or after? Or are you hesitant about participating in the research at all, and feeling the need to discuss this a bit more? If you are a student, please get in touch with KABK confidential advisor Mirjam Pol (m.pol@kabk.nl), who is also part of the DMR team. If you are a current or former staff member, please get in touch with KABK confidential counsellor Pauline Schep (p.schep@kabk.nl) or her counterpart at the KC, Gerda van Zelm (g.vanzelm@koncon.nl).

Our researchers will initially select people to ask for interview based on the information that comes in. In addition to this however, our researchers may, if it seems necessary, randomly invite people from groups within the academy that appear to be under-represented by this initial selection. This is because we aim is to receive information from the widest possible representation of the KABK.

We hope to conduct interviews with approximately 45 – 60 people.

Did you already register to participate?

If you have already informed one of the confidential advisers or the student counselor that you want to participate in the survey, you do not have to register again at this e-mail address. You will automatically be approached by Bezemer & Schubad.

How are you invited for an interview?

If you indicate that you are open to being interviewed, and are selected for this, we will contact you to arrange a time that is convenient for you. We will reserve one hour for each conversation, but shorter or longer conversations are also possible. Bezemer & Schubad will organise a meeting place, in The Hague but external to the KABK, and amply compliant with all recommended Covid-19 measures. If you would prefer a digital interview, this can happen via Teams, Zoom or Skype.

There will be only two people present during these interviews: you and the researcher. The interview is recorded, but this is only so a secretary can make an anonymous working report for our researcher's files. After that, the recording is destroyed. These work reports are **confidential**. They are used only for analysis and writing the final report, and are not shared as individual texts. The final report is drawn up **anonymously**. No names are at any point made available to anyone at the academy, including management or the Board of Governors. All other information that you may provide to us is also anonymized, and will only be used in consultation with you, for the purpose of the research.

Then what happens?

After the e-mailing and interview stage, we will analyse all the material that has been shared with us and write a report (in both in Dutch and English) that includes both our findings and an advice. This will be presented to the Board of Governors. It is our experience as an agency that the results of our investigations **always** lead to follow-up actions to improve a situation.

The outcome of the report and the recommendations it includes will then be widely communicated within the KABK.

We expect to have our report ready some time in the first quarter of 2021. For a successful investigation, we need as much information as possible, so please help us with this! And just to stress again: the results of our investigations **always** lead to follow-up actions to improve a situation.

So please help us to make this possible and share your input, experiences, ideas and suggestions via: researchkabk@bezemerschubad.nl

